

*The following Letter to the Editor written by Congressman Bachus in response to the congressional debate on the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was published in several Alabama newspapers.*

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Children in low income families need affordable health care insurance. That's a principle we should all agree on.

It's why I am disheartened by the distortion and partisan politics that have marked the debate over the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP).

This is a successful program in Alabama, covering 69,000 kids. By reauthorizing SCHIP and making sure it first covers all eligible poor children, we would go a long way towards filling gaps in the health insurance system.

Unfortunately, rather than focusing SCHIP renewal on children of the working poor, the Democrat majority in Congress is insisting on a dramatic expansion that makes families earning up to \$83,000 a year eligible for taxpayer subsidies, moves as many as two million people from private insurance to government-paid health care, and even lets illegal immigrants get benefits.

This makes no sense when there are still 46,000 uninsured children in Alabama whose families are earning barely twice the poverty level or less. They should be covered first.

Rather than continue to play politics with a veto override which in all probability will fail, there's a way to solve this problem and insure poor children now.

Congress should immediately pass a bipartisan reauthorization of SCHIP that keeps the program focused on the needs of poor children and ensures coverage for kids in low income families who now receive no assistance at all. It can do so without a \$35 billion taxpayer-financed expansion that would make illegal immigrants eligible to participate in a program intended for citizens.